

Flashy rock group

Kiss only cheap thrills

By Bill Provick

For Kiss, America's new champions of winter-themed rock, the medium — assured visual effects — is in good shape, but the message — hot and heavy rock and roll of questionable quality — needs a lot more work.

The members of Kiss — four ambitious rock performers dressed in black leather with silver trim, exceptionally high boots and painted faces — have worked exceptionally hard to bring their band to international fame (or infamy, depending on your tolerance threshold when it comes to deliberate debauchery).

Thursday night they brought their programmed pyrotechnics to the Civic Centre to dazzle a young, arduous crowd of about 4,000, but had some difficulty in living up to the immense spectacular image they have formed for themselves.

Kiss' stream of determination and effort over talent and thus their records have continued only on a rebellious, visceral level, failing completely to rise up as good music without the implied element of a live performance.

With showmanship rather than musical worth, the group's main forte, one expects to be able to do what the music is, and more vehicle for the band's theatrics. But as discussed Thursday night, when the relatively brief effects start coming every third or fourth song, one has little faith in the music and little attention to the music and the band's performance.

And even if one comes to view the special effects quite highly — and they certainly were impressive — the really spectacular remains unconvincingly less effective than intended without a strong musical base from which to spring. If there is no real musical excitement on stage, the special effects remain an almost embarrassing case of overkill.

Basically, Kiss has members between Bachman-Turner Overdrive (BTO) and the old Alice Cooper band, lacking the catchiness of BTO's music and the class of Alice Cooper's original rock. Cooper and his band succeeded because they had some already strong popular songs to simplify through their theatrics.

Kiss is improving, especially now that they have adopted Cooper's record producer Bob Ezrin, but the majority of the band's established repertoire is far from memorable.

If Kiss is to capture Cooper's crown — or if it is to be by default, Cooper's — it must be by default, Cooper.



Kiss musician

having run off to Las Vegas' ready and when properly baited by the band's lead singer, the audience was happy to see more exciting than the Kiss concert. Thursday night, as was BTO's relatively good first performance here last summer. With considerably more props, Cooper was more than willing to do what he was still doing as a warm-up act for other bands.

Kiss plays a simple, high-pitched brand of hard rock but cannot all of it, and thus it comes out in but one volume — loud. There are few peaks and valleys in the music, and the music is the same as the music. There are no musical surprises, and the music is the same as the music. There are no musical surprises, and the music is the same as the music.

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band members are like comic book characters with black balloons.

One of the band's more infamous stunts involves guitarist Gene Simmons slowly exuding theatrical blood from his painted mouth, with his scarlet tongue sticking about his white face like some obscene object.

It's a good thing Kiss showed out their special effects evenly throughout the show of the kids would have been ready to go home 15 minutes after the band started.

As it was, the band's set ended — with appropriate flash and flare — just 60 minutes after it began. The crowd screamed for more, but its enthusiasm and excitement didn't quite ring true and didn't match the genuine excitement that has followed other concerts.

In contrast to the larger-than-life yet smaller-than-expected performance by Kiss, the warm-up act, Hammerhead, from Vancouver, arrived on stage without an image, reputation or following. In fact Hammerhead is virtually unknown in this area, but they may well change.

Though this surprisingly unexpected audience, it turned in an impressive 45 minutes of hard and tight rock and roll. Musically, though, nothing for the recognition, they were considered by the band and had Hammerhead arrived with half the exposure, image and degree of familiarity Kiss had.

Even when reviving the band's original image, they could easily have found the features performers right off the stage.

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